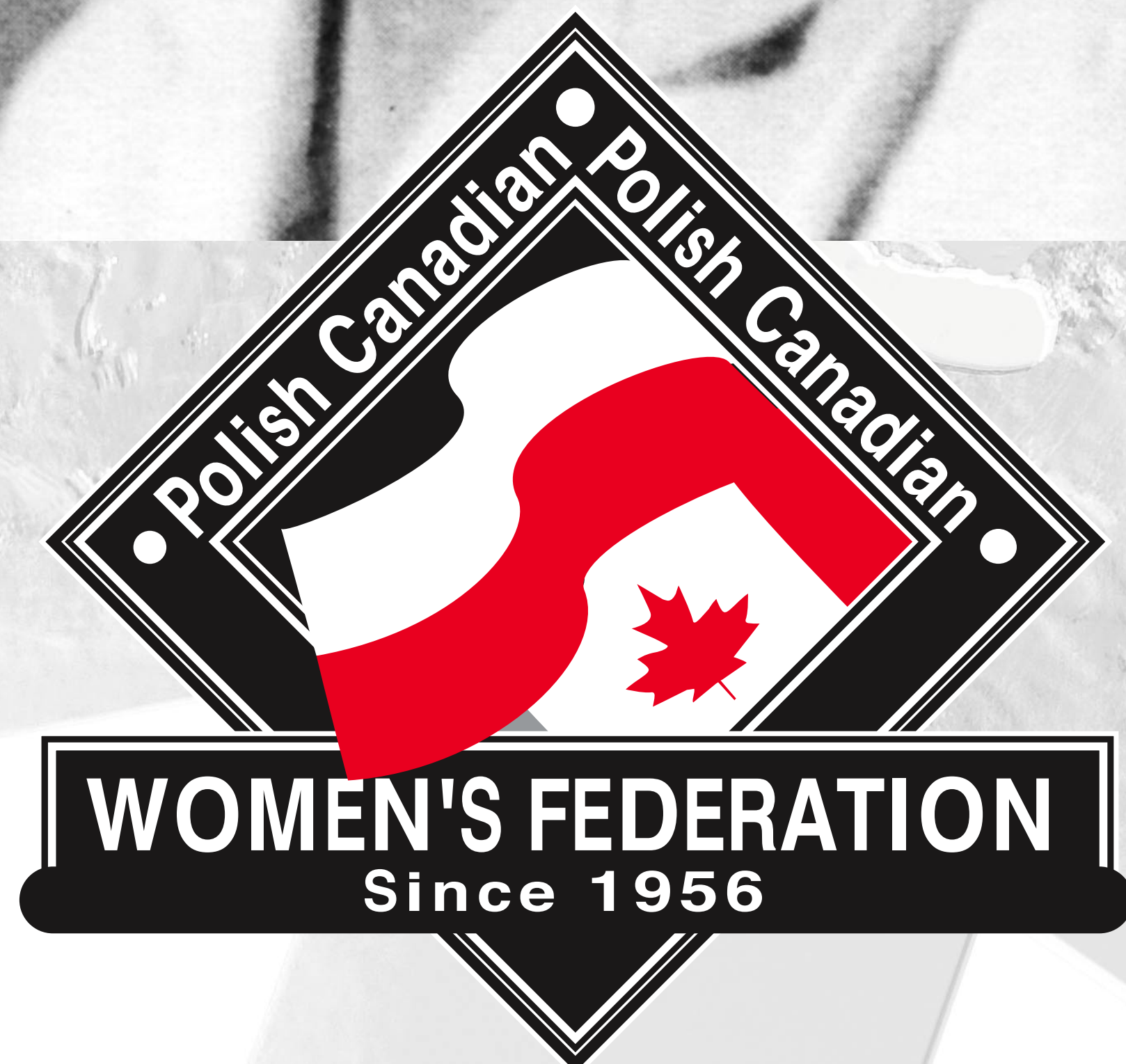


Mirosława (Mira) Gawalewicz

(1931-1992)

Community activist



POLISH SPIRIT



Mirosława Gawalewicz's public activities earned her the highest respect of the Polish community of Ontario. For her contribution to her adopted country, she was honoured with the Order of Canada in 1991.

Mira Gawalewicz was born in Warsaw where she survived World War Two, after which she lived with her mother in Great Britain, completing her secondary education in London. In 1960, she immigrated to Canada, initially settling in Montreal and then in Ottawa.

Ms Gawalewicz began her public activity as a member of the Polish Canadian Women's Federation, soon becoming president of its Branch 8 (Ottawa). In 1989, she was elected national president of the Canadian Women's Federation for a three-year term, and in 1977 became the first woman president of the Ottawa Branch of the Canadian Polish Congress. She was also named to the Advisory Council on Multiculturalism and Citizenship and chaired several committees.

Her greatest accomplishment was initiating an emergency relief fund to aid Poland at the time when Solidarity struggled to liberate the country from communism. In 1980, in view of the general shortages in Poland, she founded a committee of twenty-five medical doctors, pharmacists and other professionals in Ottawa to assist hospitals in Poland. The following year, she created and chaired the Immigrant Sponsorship Program at the Canadian Polish Congress to aid the new wave of Polish immigrants, helping families reunify and settle down, organizing shelter, food, furniture and clothing for them.

Ms. Gawalewicz was also active in the World Polonia Foundation, which collected money for Polish cultural and educational institutions outside of Poland, serving as its president 1986-91.

In 1987, she was elected president of the Canadian Council for Repressed Nations, and became a board member of the Family and Patient Communication Centre.

Among numerous honours community work earned Ms Gawalewicz were the Provincial Volunteer Award of the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, and decorations from the Family and Patient Communication Centre, Canadian Polish Congress and Polish Government in Exile.

Photos from top left clockwise:
• Mirosława Gawalewicz • At the head table of the Polish community meeting in Ottawa (M.Gawalewicz - first from the right) • Active members of the Polish community in Ottawa (M.Gawalewicz - first from the left)
Photos - Ewa Zadarnowska's archives